

The Discovery Museum and Planetarium respectfully urges the Appropriations Committee and Subcommittee on Conservation and Development to preserve the line item funding for The Discovery Museum and Planetarium allocated under the Department of Economic and Community Development.

The Discovery Museum has been a valued regional resource for STEM learning for decades. We provide a hardy portfolio of STEM learning experiences including: unmediated gallery-based exploration of STEM focused temporary and permanent exhibits, over 80 unique onsite and offsite mediated demonstrations and learning labs, space exploration simulation in the State's only Challenger Learning Center, Planetarium shows in Fairfield County's only working planetarium, unique grant-funded school-museum science learning partnerships, and an engaging 7-week summer science learning program. We secure private funding that enables us to provide programming to underserved students, and our Education department travels to schools and institutions that cannot afford to come to us.

Our on-site experience includes three floors of hands-on exhibits that promote individual exploration and familial learning, and, as the attached letters of support demonstrate, we engage a broad community in a variety of ways, including special event days that celebrate science and local heritage, and a free public lecture series.

In the past year, the Museum has come under new leadership and has refocused its efforts to secure funding which will enable us to make additional facilities upgrades and expand programming. The Connecticut Energy Efficiency Fund will fund the fabrication and installation of a new exhibit that promotes responsible energy citizenry. Likewise, NASA has invested in the Museum's future by announcing its plans to fund our innovative K-12 rocketry program. We have also introduced an entirely privately-funded after school talented and gifted program for socioeconomically underserved students in Bridgeport.

While the Museum has made great strides in securing increasingly diverse funding to support exhibits and facilities upgrades while advancing our programming, line item funding provided by the State of Connecticut enables us to meet the demands of necessary operating expenses. As such, significant cuts and/or the removal of The Discovery Museum's line item will negatively affect our ability to continue the work that we do to enhance the education of the thousands of students that benefit from our programming each year.

The education and enrichment of our children will shape the future of our State. The Discovery Museum and Planetarium provides visitors with occasion to be inspired, and facilitates STEM learning experiences that spark wonder and ignite creativity to form the foundation for the development of a lifetime love of STEM learning. By providing programmatic experiences that resonate with the innate curiosity, learning desire, spirit of exploration, and quest for knowing of our young learners we encourage them to be scientists, engineers, and inventors today so that they are better prepared to embrace a rigorous STEM academic investigation or challenge or entertain the idea of a seemingly unreachable STEM career option tomorrow.

The Discovery Museum and Planetarium has helped develop a rich community for over fifty years, and is committed to the continued development of future generations of STEM learners through our innovative programming. For these reasons we again respectfully urge you to preserve the line item funding for The Discovery Museum and Planetarium under the Department of Economic and Community Development.